

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Original) A ball joint comprising a ball stud having a spherical head portion and a shaft portion, and a socket coupled with the spherical head portion of the ball stud via a ball seat, wherein the ball stud can turn in relation to the socket about the spherical center of the spherical head portion, characterized by comprising elastic deformation allowing means for allowing the ball seat to elastically deform in the rotational direction about the center axis of the shaft portion; and in a region corresponding to the elastic deformation allowing means, frictional engagement force generated between the spherical head portion and the ball seat is made greater than that between the ball seat and the socket, whereby when the ball stud rotates about the center axis, the ball seat elastically deforms in the rotational direction before the spherical head portion starts sliding in relation to the ball seat in the region where a larger frictional engagement force is generated.

2. (Original) A ball joint according to claim 1, wherein the ball seat is constituted by materials having large and small friction coefficients, respectively; in a region where elastic deformation in the rotational direction is permitted by means of the elastic deformation allowing means, a material of large friction coefficient is partially provided at a portion of the ball seat which comes into engagement with the spherical head portion, and a material of small friction coefficient is provided at a portion of the ball seat which comes into engagement with the socket; and in a region where elastic deformation in the rotational direction is not permitted by means of the elastic deformation allowing means, the material of large friction coefficient is provided at a portion of the ball seat which comes into

engagement with the socket, and the material of small friction coefficient is provided at a portion of the ball seat which comes into engagement with the spherical head portion.

3. (Currently Amended) A ball joint according to claim 1 ~~or~~ 2, wherein the elastic deformation allowing means comprises a plurality of slits formed in the ball seat.

4. (New) A ball joint according to claim 2, wherein the elastic deformation allowing means comprises a plurality of slits formed in the ball seat.